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Via Fax – 703-699-2735
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To: The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman, 2005 Defense Base Closure And Realignment Commission
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Subject: Proposed Move of Night Vision Laboratory (NVL) from Ft. Belvoir, VA to
Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), MD

As representatives of the industry developing and producing the imaging and night vision technology critical to US military superiority, we are concerned about the proposed move of the Night Vision Laboratory (NVL) from Ft. Belvoir, VA. Moving NVL to Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), MD, may jeopardize critical development and fielding of key military sensor technology.

The Army recommendations and intentions are clear:

7.8 RDA/T&E

The Army coordinated with the Technical JCSCG to develop recommendations that achieve a major transformation by collocating and integrating major RDA/T&E elements currently scattered at many sites by assembling Human Systems, Information Systems, Sensors, Electronics, and Chemical-Biological RDA at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. The collocation of Communications-Electronics Research Development and Engineering Center, Night Vision Lab, Communications Electronics Command, Army Test and Evaluation Command, several PEOs and PMs, Biological-Medical, and Chemical-Biological RDA at Aberdeen Proving Ground creates a powerful Center for Soldier-Focused Systems that permit integration and coordination at every step from R and D through T, A, & E. Other recommendations create similar Joint facilities at Detroit Arsenal, MI (Ground Vehicles), Redstone Arsenal, AL (Aviation), and Picatinny Arsenal, NJ (Guns and Ammunitions) to reduce cost and enhance effectiveness. The recommendations permit the closure of Fort Monmouth, NJ.

The intention to have integrated development of Soldier-Focused Systems coordinated from R and D through T, A, & E, is worthwhile and valuable. We hope that, in the case of NVL, the benefits of the proposed integration can be accomplished without relocation.

Military imaging technology is very technically complex and of limited commercial use. Therefore, it is developed and produced by a small, specialized, unique infrastructure - a group of experts and dedicated facilities in the government and in industry. NVL's core competence is critical to our national security. We are afraid that the very successful military imaging infrastructure, centered largely around NVL, will lose much of its effectiveness and require many years and dollars to restore. This is especially worrisome at a time of highly increased need for advanced night vision and imaging technology. To meet this need, both the government and our industry require NVL to be at its peak, not weakened by a major relocation.

These are the reasons for our concern:

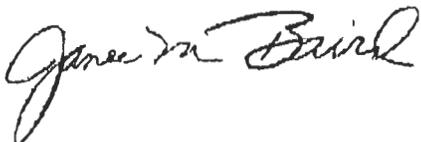
- ❖ The military imaging infrastructure has developed more than half a century of not only equipment, but also the training of technical experts in this unique area and the establishment of inter-organizational relationships and collaborations characteristic of an effective community all at the cost of 10's of \$B. NVL is the Army (and principal military) Center of Excellence for this technology, a focal point for the night vision and military imaging community, and a foundation for this infrastructure. A foundation is not easily moved without harming the building.
- ❖ Most of the other key government agencies interested in this technology (including the Naval Research Laboratory, DARPA, MDA, and others) and many of the civilian support firms are located within a few miles of NVL. Were NVL to move, the efficiency of these interactions will suffer.
- ❖ APG is approximately 100 miles north of Ft. Belvoir, through some of the most populous areas in the United States. This will make commuting impossible for most current NVL workers, and frustrate convenient interaction for many in other collaborating Government agencies and in civilian support organizations. Many NVL employees, being forced to relocate, will likely find other work, depriving the community of their expertise.

- ❖ Relocation of the technical equipment, especially semiconductor processing and analysis equipment, to APG will likely reduce its effectiveness over several years.
- ❖ Current and near-future programs (e.g. the Army's 3rd Gen FPAs, equipping sensors for UAV's, and novel reconnaissance sensors) now being managed by NVL, will likely suffer both directly and indirectly (through the distraction of key NVL personnel).

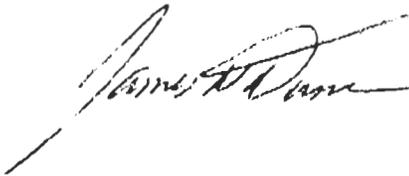
For more than 40 years NVL has led the technology development that now allows our military to "own the night" and give our soldiers unparalleled advantage during combat. Throughout this time NVL has provided the basic technical vision for this area, defined its phenomenology, contributed key technical developments all along the way, and overseen much of the progress throughout the industry. It has led the development of three generations of infrared imagers, as well as developing low-light-level image intensifiers. Its people and publications form the repository of wisdom and understanding in the area. Because of this, NVESD is the center of excellence for infrared technology across the Tri-Services. In fact, other federal agencies such as Department of Homeland Security also consult NVESD for their needs. Traditionally NVESD has also served as the cohesive force that coordinates and influences the direction of the entire infrared industry. Relocation can undermine this legacy and capability.

Ft. Belvoir is not slated to be closed. NVL has an established legacy in its present Ft. Belvoir location of working effectively to lead development of the military's night vision and imaging capability. Therefore, we see no driving need to move NVL. Should a need grow with time as they interact with the new center at APG, it should be possible to phase an appropriate transition..

We request that you reconsider relocating NVL, and that you recommend in this special case that NVL remain at the current location in Ft. Belvoir for the foreseeable future.



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